

THE PASSAGE FROM THE WORLD

cruel torments to increase in her *body* every day. And, we being now come to Lent, she began, notwithstanding her weakness, to be so zealous in prayer that it was a wondrous thing, with those humble sighs and dolorous laments that drew our hearts from us. I think you know that her prayers were of such intensity, that one hour of prayer more consumed that poor little body than two days upon the rack would have done another.¹ Therefore, every morning with tears we lifted her up after Communion, in such a state that whoso saw her deemed her dead, and carried her to her couch. And, after an hour or two, she would rise up, and we went to San Pietro, which is a long mile from us, and then she set herself to prayer, and she remained there until nearly vespers, after which she returned home, so exhausted that she seemed a dead woman ; and acting thus she continued, every day in the same way, until the third Sunday of Lent."

These are things of which it is impossible for us to speak in the language of modern life. We have Catherine's own words, in the two wonderful letters written to Fra Raimondo on February 15, 1380, the Wednesday after the first Sunday in Lent, in which she takes leave of him and of the world. Never was the psychology of saintliness so marvellously revealed by one who had penetrated its depths, no less securely than she had scaled its heights.

" In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary.

"Dearest and sweetest father in Christ sweet Jesus. I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious blood, with desire of seeing you a column newly founded in the garden of Holy Church, like a faithful bridegroom of the Truth, as you ought to be ; and then shall I deem my soul blessed. I would not have you look back because of any adversity or persecution, but I would have you glory in adversity; for in enduring we manifest our love and constancy, and render glory to God's name ; in other wise, no. Now is the

¹ *Stando in m la corda due giorni*, more literally, "two days of the strappado," the mediaeval Italian method of examining prisoners. I quote the original vernacular of this letter, appended to the early Venetian editions of the *Diakgp*.